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EDITORIAL

THE Unitarian Church has more self appointed spokesmen than any other for the simple reason that it has steadfastly and patiently held to the conviction that diversity of approach to religious faith was both inevitable and welcome. Furthermore that Truth by its nature, would prevail, and in good time the God of all would receive all into His Unity.

Toward this coming of the Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth the Unitarian mind has seen a Temple of the Spirit building through the ages wherever were known the pure in heart and righteousness was incarnate. Here, on the long journey, were the milestones that gleamed with promise, and here spirit found its freedom to steer human evolution nearer the ideal goal.

But today mankind finds itself in a period of world convulsion and change and it would be strange indeed if our denomination of pioneers had not shown deviations from traditional Unitarianism even to the point of dogmatic extremists as well as lesser variations. Slogans of change are on the air with radical accents and within the Unitarian fold may be found some who worship emancipation and would make God Emeritus. In one corner a band of seekers claiming priority for the universal aspect of religion may deliver its message that to purge everyone of belief is preparation for universal belief. This wing of our denomination is possessed with a "divine discontent" that revolts so passionately against the complex failure and incompleteness of the human equation that general cleavage between past and present seems hte only hope.

Unity of Mankind

At one and the same time however, other Unitarians equally concerned with the "inescapable oneness of mankind", still profess the tenents of historic Unitarianism that God, the Father of all men is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and that Jesus of Nazareth "exemplified the nature of God in a manner so full and sufficient that the example of his life remains the surest guide and most enduring inspiration." Beneath these divergent, constituant parts of our denomination is the common ground of reliance upon the principle of unity in diversity which, in this day of dawning world conscience is shifting the accent to unity in fellowship. Plainly in the political field this current toward universalism is strong and ethical, the Christian ideal of human brotherhood has moved up to the pilot's seat. The vision of humanity, "one and indivisible" has been given mankind. Can humanity move toward its consumation?

In this connection Dr. Park once wrote, "In the old days we were rich in purpose but poor in power. Today we are rich in power but poor in purpose. Formerly there was a great deal we might do and the question was, How? Now there is a great deal we might do and the question is, Why? We need a vision of God's next new purpose to absorb the power we possess. But we are reminded that we have such a purpose right at hand—a united world."

This longing for the common good appears in Dr. Gray-Smith's prayer—"O thou spirit of Community be thou our Star of Hope. Not upon the seas that separate us is our desire set, nor on walls that divide us one from another. Strengthen within us the bond that binds each man to his fellow. Write upon the heart of each the law that is common to every heart. Join each to each and each to all by the rule of mutual love."

It would seem that in this realm of thought and feeling a religious "liberal" might humbly and thankfully find himself prepared to appre-

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Protestants, Catholics And Unity *

Charles Conrad Forman

Some ten days ago the Christian world was challenged by the announcement of Pope John XXIII that plans were being made for an Ecumenical Council which will probably be convened in 1961. This in itself would be of no special concern to Protestants. An Ecumenical Council brings together Roman Catholic leaders from all parts of the world. The major concern of the proposed Council does, however, affect us since its purpose is ". . . to seek the unity of the church, desired by so many souls all over the world," and it is rumored that the Pope is sounding out Protestant leaders to sense their reaction to an invitation to attend such a Council as 'observers'.

The response to this announcement has, as the press has pointed out, been varied in Protestant circles. One cannot help but wonder how far we have come when we remember that ninety years ago, when the last Ecumenical Council was held, Protestant Churchmen declined such an invitation. Similarly, invitations to Protestant sponsored Conferences of the past 50 years have been politely declined by the Vatican. Nevertheless, I say the Christian world has been challenged once more. Have we become mature enough to be able to take the first steps toward a renewed and deeper understanding of our differences and of our common faith? There are some people who would quite frankly admit to no interest in better understanding—a fact which seems to me to be lamentable and, indeed, indefensible.

In a thoughtful book which appeared three years ago the author, a French priest (George H. Tavard, *The Catholic Approach to Protestantism*) makes this introductory statement:

> "My next-door neighbor is a Protestant: and we live in different worlds. What we know of one another is one-sided or even false, disparaging if not hostile. How can we understand or know each other? According to the books where I read about him, his religious ancestors were schismatic, heretic, apostate, and sacrilegious. According to the books where he reads about me, my religious ancestors were corrupt and Should he read the books where I read about him, he would consider them filled superstitious idoraters and murderers. with untruths and lies. Should I read the books where he reads about me, I would think them full of exaggerations and misunderstandings. Is it possible to span the chasm that separates us? For four centuries now we have been working side by side. Together we are born and we die. We study the same sciences and make similar discoveries. And for four centuries we have been prolonging the scandal that a divided Christendom exhibits to its own eyes and to those of the world."

Now, even when we have made the case, and a strong case can be made, for the strength that religious diversity provides, we will have to face the charge that a divided and warring Christianity *is a scandal.* Think of the world's history in the past forty years: Fascism, Naziism, Communism, atheistic materialism — ideologies which have made and are making strong bids for men's souls. Can we any longer afford the luxury of an arrogance that fosters prejudice and religious bigotry? Can we possibly imagine that the hostilities that exist between the historic forms of Christianity can in any manner meet the challenge for survival which confronts the world in this century?

Protestant and Catholic Distortions

Let us honestly admit that prejudice exists among both Catholics and Protestants — and that it is expressed in crudities that ought to make us blush. An official statement of the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church is an example in point:

> ". . . we teach that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures concerning the Antichrist have been fulfilled in the Pope of Rome . . . that he recognizes only those as members of the Christian Church who bow to his

* A sermon preached at the First Church in Plymouth, Mass. on Feb. 8, 1959.

authority; and that, like a deluge, he had inundated the whole church with his anti-christian doctrines till God revealed him through the Reformation . . . Hence we subscribe to the statement of our Confessions that the Pope is the very Antichrist."

There is strangely little of the spirit of the Man of Galilee in those words!

On the other side, the same sort of crudities exist among Catholics. Some Roman Catholics fail to see the Reformation in its historical perspective and refuse to believe that the Church of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a corrupt Church that desperately needed reforming. Luther left the Church not because in conscience he could do nothing else, but because he wanted to marry a nun! Calvin was psychopahtically cruel; Henry the VIIIth led the English Church away from communion with Rome because he wanted more wives! So the distortions go and so they are perpetuated by Protestants and Catholics alike.

In the face of today's history and before a shrinking world that brings us into daily contact with other historic religions, Protestant and Catholic Christians ought to be thinking about those things we hold in common, those things that unite rather than divide. Richard Baxter, the great English Puritan of the Seventeenth century said this ought to be our course:

"To come as near together as we can possibly in our principles; and when we cannot, yet to unite as far as may be our practice, though on different principles; and where that cannot be, yet to agree on the most loving, peaceable course in this way of carrying on our different practices."

We would learn from one another! From our Catholic friends we would learn lessons in loyalty to one's church and devotion to one's faith. Many Protestants would learn for the first time what is involved in taking religion seriously. And Catholics might learn from their Protestant neighbors how to participate in decisions affecting the church and what creative use might be made of freedom of thought and action. And together we should learn that God is One; He is Almighty; He belongs to no sect or creed; rather, all men belong to Him. For the God of Roman Catholicism and the God of Protestantism and the God of Eastern Orthodoxy are *not three Gods* but one God and Jesus of Nazareth brought us the fullest revelation that we ever had of what God is really like. These things we hold in common and ought to consciously share. That God is the God of all; that Jesus is our elder brother, and that all men everywhere are brothers, the children of one Father.

The Liberal Demand

To claim to be liberal in religion is to accept a great responsibility — especially great in this illiberal time. Liberal Christians then, least of all people, can participate in any kind of bigotry, prejudice, hatred, and sectarianism that is the blight and shame of religious life. This does not mean that we should close our eyes to the differences that exist, to the extension of Roman Catholic interests into the political sphere, to the pressure for special legislation that will impose upon non-catholics Catholic practices. But it does mean that we must build a bridge of understanding which has as its foundation stone *respect.* Is it too much to say that liberal Christians ought to respect the religion and faith of Catholic Christians? Anything less than respect sells short the genius of free and liberal Christianity that can appreciate what it cannot accept.

And the other foundation stone for a bridge of Protestant-Catholic understanding is *conscience.* We must respect our own consciences and the conscience of others, for a man's conscience must be kept unsullied, pure and inviolate. Father Tavard says:

"The Catholic Church is in duty bound to preach the Gospel to all nations, since this is her vocation. Protestantism must repeat with Luther, "I cannot do otherwise," since conscience must be followed . . . even when it disagrees with the Church."

It is a difficult thing to be truly liberal and generous in our attitudes. It is far easier to separate than to find a common ground on which we may stand as brothers who in conscience disagree. In the meantime, we ought not to tire of seeking and realizing more fully the liberal genius. And we ought to long for that unity which Ignatius of Antioch described 1900 years ago:

"Form all together one choir, so that with the symphony of your feelings and having

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Job — Fore-Runner of Existentialism?

Arthur Foote

The wisdom literature, post-exilic, stands in contrast to the historical, prophetic and devotional writings. In *Job*, the distinctive features of Jewish faith are lacking. There is no covenant with Yahweh, no indication that Israel is a worshipping community, no references to the centrality of worship. Hence, it is difficult to understand how this book, quite at cross-currents to the main stream of Israel's faith, found its way into the Canon. But there it is, troublesome and disturbing to the orthodox, but wonderfully refreshing to the heterodox, and timelessly modern.

Thomas Wolfe called *Job* "the most tragic, sublime, and beautiful expression of human loneliness" he had ever read. Tennyson thought it "the greatest poem of ancient and modern times", while Carlyle maintained that nothing ever written, "in the Bible or out of it, (is) of equal merit."

Such exaggerated praise may put us off. More soberly, we can allow it a secure niche as one of the great classic utterances of man's defiance against his fate, against unmerited suffering, against the seeming injustice and indifference of God. Scholars compare it to *Prometheus Bound, The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost* and *Faust.* Kant based his study of theodicy on Job, as he wrestled with the problem of how to reconcile the omnipotence of God with the evil in the world. How can an all-knowing, all-powerful God be considered benevolent and just? As Archibald MacLeish's "Satan"—a chap by the name of Nickles—puts it in MacLeish's new play-in-verse, *J. B.*

> "If God is God he is not good;
> If God is good he is not God:
> Take the even, take the odd . ."

Job seems to have been the first person squarely to confront this choice; and twenty-five hundred years later we confess that no one has ever surpassed this unknown, creative genius, as he wrestled with the justice and goodness of God, and probed the depths of human despair, and hurled defiant challenges into the empty sky. Few arguments, endeavoring to "justiy the ways of God to men" were missed by this ancient poet.

The Prologue of Job

We are not concerned with the problems of biblical criticism. But we must remember that the Prologue and Epilogue are just what they seem—an ancient folk-tale, in the best Hebrew tradition of fireside story-telling; stylized, rich in psychological insights, deceptively naive. This prologue and epilogue tell the story of the man of Ur whose name was Job, a man "blameless and upright," God-fearing and prosperous. But Job's sincerity was suspect to one of the Heavenly Council, namely Satan, who is represented not as God's arch-enemy, but as an angel apparently in good standing.

Satan, returning from "going to and fro" on earth, is annoyed by Yahweh's fulsome praise of Job, and bets Yahweh that, given a free hand, he can make Job renounce his faith.

So Job is put to the test. He loses everything, in quick succession—children, home, possessions, reputation, health. Even his wife urges him to "curse God and die", as he sits among the ashes, covered "with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." But he answers:

> "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good at the hand of Yahweh and . . not evil? . . . Yahew gave, and Yahweh has taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh."

Job's three friends, hearing of his ill-fortune, come to console him; but they hardly recognize him. Rending their clothes, and sprinkling dust upon their heads, they sit with him on the ground for seven days and nights, without speaking a word, "for they say that his suffering was very great."

Here the prologue ends. In the Epilogue, Job having proved faithful, is properly rewarded. The Lord restores his fortunes two-fold, including a whole new set of children. Like all good folktales, Job lived happily ever after.

But when we turn, at the end of chapter two, from the prose prologue to the magnificent

poetry of Job's lament, our hero abruptly ceases to be a paragon of patience, serenely enduring the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune". In his place, we have a rebel, "a titanic challenger of the deity."

The evidence is clear enough that the unknown poet simply took an ancient, well-known story to provide a setting for his poetic meditations—much as Goethe borrowed the mediaeval legend of Dr. Faustus.

And "Job opened his mouth and cursed
the day of his birth.
And Job said: Why did I not die at birth . . .
For then I should have . . . been
at rest
With kings and counselors . . .
(Where) the wicked cease from
troubling
And the weary are at rest."

After this initial outburst, the dialogue of Job and his three "friends" begins. Eliphaz leads off, chiding him gently at first; reminding him that God is just, that all men are sinful, that the wise course for Job is not to curse God but to seek Him "who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number."

"Happy is the man whom God reproves;
Therefore despise not the chastening of
the Almighty."

The accusation to which Job pleads innocent is simply that he must have brought all this upon himself; he must have sinned, consciously or unconsciously. It is impossible for orthodoxy to impute injustice to God.

But Job asks for particulars:
"Teach me, and I will be silent;
Make me understand how I have erred."

Job is willing to be shown the error of his ways; yet he knows that he has commited no crime,—at least, no crime that could possibly merit such punishment as he suffers. Into his lament there comes now a sense of alienation:

"Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
And like a hireling who looks for his wages,
So I am allotted months of emptiness,
And nights of misery are apportioned to me.
When I lie down I say; 'When shall I arise?'
But the night is long,
And I am full of tossing till the dawn . . . .
My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
And come to their end without hope."

This does not melt his "friends" hearts; they only redouble their argument.

"Does God pervert justice?", asks Bildad.
"Stop blaspheming, and seek God's forgiveness."

Already Job is an "outsider". Estranged from God *and* from men, one feels he has almost ceased to listen to the self-righteous trio. With growing vehemence, he pursues his defiant indictment of God:

"How can a man be just before God" he
inquires . . .
"Behold, he snatches away; who can hinder
him?
Who will say to him, 'What doest thou?' "

God is not restrained by moral standards. Innocent or guilty, we can expect neither justice nor mercy from him. Seldom in all literature has God been more bitterly accused. Also clear is Job's courage. In contrast, the "friends" appear in a poor light. Coleridge, in *The Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit*, called them "orthodox liars for God", and spoke of "the hollow truisms, the unsufficing half-truths, the false assumptions and malignant insinuations of the supercilious bigots."

Strong and unkind as is such language, it only matches Job's own description of them:

"As for you, you whitewash with lies;
worthless physicians are you all.
Oh that you would keep silent."

With masterly craftsmanship, the poet lets us understand that, in contrast to Job's angry courage, the trio's anger hides their fear. The discussion is threatening to their security. Perhaps in the beginning they genuinely wanted to comfort their friend; but in the face of his "promethean defiance", they become increasingly incapable of sympathy. At last, the debate wears itself out, and the "friends", in angry impotence, fall silent. Only Job continues to speak; and he seems quite oblivious of their continued presence.*

"As long as my breath is in me . . .
My lips will not speak falsehood . . .
Till I die I will not put away my integrity
from me.

* Let it be noted that we accept the opinion of the scholars who argue that Ch. 28—"Where shall wisdom be found":—is a later interpolation, as are the speeches of Elihu, Chs. 32-37.

I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go;
My heart does not reproach me for any of my days."

Job's "Oath of Clearing"

Job's summation comprises three poems (chs. 29-31). In the first, he remembers his former life—

"the days when God watched over, and by his light I walked through darkness . . . when my children were about me, and . . . when I went to the gate of the city, . . . the young men saw me and withdrew, and the aged rose and stood."

The second poem (ch. 30) relates his present pitiful alienation. He has become a laughing-stock, a byword. Men keep aloof, they spit at sight of him. And though he cries to God, there is no answer.

The third poem (ch. 31) Moulton called Job's *Oath of Clearing*. If nothing else, it reveals the author's high moral stature. Nothing nobler is to be found in the Bible. Terrien says that this passage "reflects a standard of behavior which is unexcelled either in the Old Testament, the literature of the Ancient Near East and classical Greece, or in the New Testament, not excluding the Sermon on the Mount."

Even the lustful glance at a virgin is condemned—the wicked thought, the impure motive. It is clear that the poet wished to establish beyond shadow of doubt that Job is innocent, and is a man of exemplary character and great ethical sensitivity.

(Artistically, and from every other point of view, it is a pity that a later and lesser poet interpolated here the lengthy discourses of Elihu, which seem to add nothing to the argument, and only delay the action for which the reader is eagerly waiting—God's answer "out of the whirlwind." I believe it proper to skip directly from Job's "Oath of Clearing", ch. 31, to God's answer, chs. 38-42.)

God's answer is dramatic:

"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge"
Gird up your loins like a man;
I will question you, and you shall declare to me."

At once we see that God has no intention of taking the stand in his own defense. Who is Job to think he can be God's judge? For seventy-one verses, we have magnificent poetry, a superb description of God's power, and the wonderfulness of the created world The grandeur of the poetry almost makes us forget the fact that God is not answering Job. He is bludgeoning him. As Samuel Terrien observes:

"Let us admit that the irony of God is bewildering. It is not even an especially delicate species of sarcasm . . . At the extremity of human destitution, Job has implored, begged, and demanded that God come and answer the riddle of crucifixion. A derelict of society and a heretic on the verge of excommunication asksk for recognition and what does he get? Questions, all of them apparently irrelevant?"

Job has sought proof of God's love. He certainly doesn't get it. As C. G. Jung, in *Answer to Job* puts it:

"God does not want to be just; he merely flaunts might over right."

And so it would appear, Job has not doubted God's existence, his majesty, his power. He needs further proof of that. In fact, says Jung,

"God's thunderings at Job so completely miss the point that one cannot help but see how much he is occupied with himself."

According to Jung, the "God" who answers out of the whirlwind is answering out of the Unconscious. We may want to challenge Jung's thesis, but it is clear that there is in "this almighty exhibition of thunder and lightning" no solution to the theodetic problem. God does not defend his character. He acts as though he were contending with a rival deity, not a mere man. It is an absurdly one-sided contest.

"And the Lord said to Job:

Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
He who argues with God, let him answer it."

"Then Job answered the Lord:

Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee?
I lay my hand on my mouth."

This answer apparently does not suffice to appease God's feelings. For he begins again:

"Will you put even me in the wrong?" he demands.

Will you condemn me that you may be justified?
Have you an arm like God,
And can you thunder with a voice like his?"

It is anything but a generous portrait of God the unknown poet paints—God riding rough-shod over the man he has so cruelly mistreated. Job's Almighty shows no respect for human dignity. He can only further humiliate his victim. From start to finish, not a trace of sympathy. Job's God to the end shows no aspects of personality.

Job's second reply to God goes a step further than his first. In the first, he is browbeaten into silence. The second time—and we must note this speech carefully, for upon its interpretation pivots the meaning of the whole book—

"Job answered the Lord and said:

I know that thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.
'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.'
I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees thee;
Therefore I despise myself,
And repent in dust and ashes."

The standard interpretation of this final speech is that it is a confession, a retraction of all Job's rash charges, as he prostrates himself humbly and repentantly before God. Innocent of wrongdoing he may certainly have been. But he had been guilty of the worst of all sins—presumptuous pride, "hubris". His "Oath of Clearing" may set forth a lofty ethic, but any man who claims to be so righteous betrays his own arrogance.

We can scarcely deny that Job is portrayed throughout as self-centered, bound up in his suffering. We might even call it "self-pity". But is it really "hubris"? We recall Thomas Wolfe's statement, in *God's Lonely Man*, that "the surest cure for vanity is loneliness." If this is true, Job was not vain. His extreme efforts at self vindication were the mark of his desperation to know if God is more than an inscrutible and irresistible cosmic force.

But if the poet meant Job's repentance to be the key to understanding the book, then we must assume that God's failure to offer Job consolation or explanation was his way of insisting that the mystery cannot be solved, or God made humanly accountable—for God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts ours.

Karl Jaspers, in his first published work after the war, "The Question of German Guilt" (1946), makes reference to Jeremiah rather than Job, but for our purpose it does not matter. Jaspers is speaking of the way in which the Bible "was our comfort for those twelve years" that the Nazis were in power. And the kind of comfort the Bible offered was not the trusting reassurance of the Psalmists, but the tortured experience of a man like Jeremiah, who saw everything he had labored for tumbling down around his head, and yet said to Baruch:

"Thus says the Lord:

Behold, what I have built I am breaking down,
And what I have planted I am plucking up—that is the whole land.
And do you seek great things for yourself?
Seek them not . . .";

The interpretation Jaspers gives this verse is: "That God is, is enough. When all things fade away, God is—that is the only fixed point." Thus, though Job cannot know what he most wants to know—how to "justify the ways of God to man": —nevertheless he is satisfied in the end.

God did not answer Job's question, *but he answered Job.* And that is enough. For the person who feels certain that God *is* does not despair in the ultimate situation.

Did Job Defeat God?

But perhaps Job's final speech ought to be interpreted differently. Dr. Jung offers at least one alternative reading. "Guileless as Job's speech sounds, it could just as well be equivocal." His protestations and accusations have proven entirely useless. Having heard of God "by the hearing of the ear" he had hoped to find him kind, just, benevolent. But now, "my eye sees thee." And what the eye sees is the bitter truth: "To his horror, he has discovered that Yahweh is not human but, in certain respects,

less than human . . . . Yahweh is a phenomenon and not a human being."

It is Jung's contention that, with the Book of Job, something new has taken place, "something that has never occurred before in world history, the un-heard of fact that, without knowing it or wanting it, a mortal man is raised by his own moral behavior above the stars in heaven, from which position of advantage he can behold the back of Yahweh."

In short, battered to pulp by God's might though Job may have been, he is the real victor in this contest of titans. Little David has slain the giant, Goliath. God has suffered moral defeat at his hands.

Job and the Existentialists

It seems obvious that the poet of *Job* raised the existentialist questions. The book is all about "the tragic sense of life". The very ambiguity of its meaning is typical of the existentialists. It always seems hard to pin them down. So this ancient poet portrays the problem of human suffering, of estrangement, of divine indifference and injustice, with persistent realism. But the answer is one that permits more than one interpretation. Again, one senses the existentialist approach in the way human dignity is made to appear out of the experience of despair and extremity. Whichever way we think it ends, Job is accounted more godly—nearer to God—than his "friends".

Job foreshadows existentialism in its insistence upon an honest confrontation of reality. Martin Buber, in *Eclipse of God,* says of the prophets (and surely might have included Job):

> "They have never announced a God upon whom their hearers' striving for security reckoned. They have always aimed to shatter all security and to proclaim in the opened abyss of the final insecurity the unwished-for God who demands that his human creatures become real, they become human, and confounds all who imagine that they can take refuge in the certainty that the temple of God is in their midst."

Job fully reveals "God the void", or, more properly "God the enemy," which Buber says must precede any true recognition of "God the companion".

> "He who begins with the love of God without having previously experienced the fear of God, loves an idol which he himself has made, a god whom it is easy enough to love. He does not love the real God who is, to begin with, dreadful and incomprehensible."

True, Job does not say, with Nietzsche, "God is dead", but he comes close to saying it, when he presents to us God as impersonal power, remote, terrifying, to whom it is useless to appeal, to whom "might makes right". Job, you might say, demolishes that image of God; he defeats Yahweh, the god of Genesis, by demonstrating that such a conception of deity can never satisfy moral man. He is "a god who has fled", a half-god who must be demolished to make way for "the God who is coming." And that God must never fail to take into account our own experience of personality—the "moral imperative" we find within.

This, probably, is to say that—apart from accepting the Christian myth of the incarnation —there are only two ways honestly to escape Sartre's atheism (Even if God exists, he doesn't make any difference.) One way is the mystic's direct apprehension of divine love; a self-authenticating experience such as Jesus, Meister Eckhart, Pascal, and many others have had. The authentic mystic needs no myth to shield him from reality. He "knows", not by logic and reason, but by some direct communication arising from or through the deeps of his Unconscious, that "the silence of eternity" is "interpreted by love".

But few are mystics; most of us find the mystic's way not viable. This leaves Albert Schweitzer's alternative. Schweitzer says, in effect, that Job's God of almighty power is the God whose manifestations we see in nature—nature wonderful and merciless; the incredible loveliness of ocean and forest, and the fierce, unremitting warfare in that ocean and through that forest, in which every living creature finds himself both predator and prey, hunter and hunted. "But", says Schweitzer, "the experience I have of God within myself differs from the knowledge concerning Him which I derive from the world. In the world He appears to me as the mysterious, marvelous creative Force; within me He reveals Himself as ethical Will. In the world He is impersonal Force, within me He reveals Himself as Personality. The God whom I experience through philosophy and the God

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The Real Issue

Charles De Vries

In this friendly controversy between theism and humanism, it appears to me that we are over-looking the main issue. Charles Park, in a statement some time ago, claimed that this controversy was no longer relevant, though it was several years back. For now both the humanists and theists are one in their common faith in the dignity, or holiness of human life.

For to me the real difference, or issue, is personalistic. As to the nature of God, or reality, all of us know so little. And the more we learn about the nature of matter, and the world we live in, through the advances of science in any field, the more we realize our ignorance, as the wonder and the mystery increases. In the words of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, "the more we know, the greater the mystery becomes." The farther we advance on the frontiers of science, the deeper the ultimate mystery of all things becomes.

On this score, a little child knows as much as the most learned scientist, which I am sure the true scientist will admit. The more he observes and learns about the nature of the world we live in, the more like a child he becomes. Whether he probes into the small, *e.g.* the atoms, or into the great, *e.g.* the stars, he realizes that he lives in a fairly-land of wonder, and of enlarging mystery. He only touches the fringes of reality, as a child may play with his toys.

We are all innocents before Reality in this sense. All children playing on the beach,—the only difference is that some have picked up a few more pebbles than others. Where is the scientist who will not admit this?

Therefore, in a religious sense, by which I mean our personal and total attitude, or experience of reality, it is not so much a matter of knowing, or not-knowing, what reality is, or what God is. For both the so-called believer, and the agnostic are one in this regard. Both simply do not know what the nature of reality is, or what God is. We are all in the same boat, on this boundless and infinite ocean of life.

Moreover, all of us are fundamentally the same in our basic feelings, and thoughts, and experiences, whether we are believers or agnostics, whether we are humanists or theists. There is no real difference in our relation to the world about us,—to the shape of things, or persons, or the Ultimate Mystery which surrounds us. To us the familiar phrase is true,—"one blood, one hope, one Spirit moves in and through us all, with one destiny at the end of our lives here." We are all in the same boat, and heading to the same port. Both the believer and the agnostic will admit this.

All Of Us Agnostic

If I understand Charles Park correctly, he remains in his religious thought, or theology, basically an agnostic. He frankly admits, though a theist, he does not know any more about reality than the humanist does, or what is the nature of the life to come. He faces up to the Ultimate Mystery with the confession of his no-knowledge, or ignorance. In this regard all of us are with him. We have to be.

However, in our churches, in our religious thought and experience, as we meet together for prayer and fellowship, the real issue is not one of knowledge, or no-knowledge, it is one of personal relationship to God, or the Ultimate Mystery. It is our personality, yours and mine, in relationship to the Great Spirit" who lives and moves in, and through us all." The issue is one between the personal and the impersonal.

Here, as I see it, the theist is personal; and the humanist is impersonal. Obviously, both are the same in their relation to the world about them, and to the Ultimate Reality. The difference is in the interpretation of and approach to God or the Ultimate Reality. One is personal; the other is impersonal and abstract.

One prays; the other says he aspires. By this he means, if I understand him correctly, he does not have *any one* to pray to. This is shown in the liturgy of the humanists. So he prays to himself, or with others, as he expresses the common aspirations of the good life. This is all right, too. But the plain fact of it is,— the *impersonal* nature of his prayers, and of his religious thought.

The Humanist Dilemma

The Reality which enfolds the humanist, as for all of us, is life, or power, or energy, or truth, or beauty, or love,—but it is not personal. When the humanist calls reality *Love* he is pretty close to the personal though he may not admit it.

The humanist has a strange, if sincere, reluctance to personalize Deity, and as such he cannot sincerely pray, for one cannot pray to an abstraction with any warmth of feeling. He confesses that he cannot use the Lord's Prayer. Of course not, for that is personalistic throughout. For the Lord's Prayer he substitutes some abstract lines of aspiration, which may be put in beautiful language. Nevertheless, the heart of it is gone, for there is no personal Reality to pray to. He says that he cannot pray "Our Father", and thus separates himself from millions of human beings everywhere who live in personal relationship both to God and man.

The humanist cannot pray to the "Great Spirit" which term is so personal, and also so comprehensive in our attempt to name the Nameless. Nor can he speak of God as Will, or Mind, or Intelligence, or Thought, for all of these are personal terms. Really, he cannot speak of Deity as Love, for what is more personal than love, as we human beings experience it.

With this reluctance to personalize God, goes out, of course, most of our Hebrew and Christian tradition and literature. The Bible is not read regularly in our humanist churches, for it is personalistic in its thought of God from Genesis to Revelation. Take, for example, the Psalms and the Gospels, which are so intensely personal in their thought of God. To ignore the personalistic element is to cut the very heart out of the Bible, and of most of our present non-Biblical religious literature. All we have left is the shell.

What I am saying is not to disparage the humanists among us, for in our free fellowship, and in God's world, which is so all-inclusive, they too, have their place. I say "Amen", to all our breathren of this persuasion, and I admire the frankness and honesty of the outspoken ones among us. They show us where a naturalistic humanism leads,—to a cold impersonalism in religious language, and with it a separation from the millions of plain folks who live and believe in personal terms.

The intention I have in this statement is to keep the issue clear,—which is one of the *personal,* and the *impersonal,* in our relation to God, or the Ultimate Reality.

In our present world, which through mechanization has become so impersonal in much of our experience, we need more than ever to keep the warmth of a personal trust in God and man. With its deadening routine, and its trend to more and more detachment from the simplicities of nature, and making more difficult the personal relationships of the family and community, we need so much the grace of a personal faith in God and man. In order to integrate our world, and ourselves, it is imperative that we keep the unity, and thus the Personality of our faith central.

How strangely ironic that those of the free spirit, and who really believe this in their doctrine of man, refuse to express it in personal terms in their thought of, or their doctrine of, God! When our times are so in need of the creative warmth of a personalistic faith, they make this Great Refusal of being unwilling to speak of man's relationship to God in terms of personal faith.

They add to the bleakness, the coldness, of this "Wasteland" of man's spirit in our modern mechanical world, where *whirl,* and *speed,* and *things* are so dominant, where even man is in peril of becoming an 'economic unit', of becoming a thing, instead of a soul, a person, a child of God. They do this by cutting the very heart out of all inspiring religious faith, by making it impersonal in its expression of man's relationship to God.

Here is the *real issue,* and upon which we should try as churches of the free spirit to come to a better understanding. As such, it is a matter of method or approach in meeting the religious needs of our modern world with a creative and dynamic personal faith.

I welcome further comments on this issue of the *personal* and the *impersonal* of religious faith in our fellowship of churches.

Editor's Mail Box

[The Editor welcomes correspondence from readers of *The Unitarian Christian.* Such correspondence as may be of general interest will appear in this column.]

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Sir:

May I commend you and Mr. Harry M. Stokes for the splendid article in your December issue, "Toward an Understanding of Communion". I have been a life-long member of the Unitarian Church, as were my father and mother before. Mr. Stokes' presentation of the values and use of the Communion service is, in my humble opinion, a much needed reminder to the ultra-liberal Unitarians of today of the values contained in the symbolic services and customs of the founders of the Christian religion.

I feel that this article should be published in pamphlet form and sent to our churches and member fellowships for their use and instruction in observing this ritual which was requested as a memorial and dedication to the principles taught by Jesus of Nazareth, to whom we owe our religious idealism . . .

Sincerely yours,
Walter Swan Blake
705 Grantley St.
Baltimore 29, Md.

Sir:

I appreciate having the *Unitarian Christian* very much. I read every word and usually more than once and look forward eagerly to its coming! . . . I was especially interested in what Mr. Stokes wrote about Communion. . . .

Sincerely yours,
Raymah Dowse Gifford
Boston 15, Mass.

Sir:

My congratulations on the admirable number devoted to the problems of merger. Especially valuable is the discussion by Leland Stewart. I must agree with him on the superiority of universalism in the sense of a full orbed religion. He claims this as the distinctive ideal of the Universalist churches. Yet it is questionable whether they have excelled their Unitarian friends in affording moral and esthetic values. Also it is questionable whether the Unitarian churches must be limited to a stress upon the primacy of ideas, and thus unfitted for a fuller "integration-wholeness, inclusiveness" of values. It is not necessary for a universalist wholeness to be less forward intellectually than any other. Every church should seek the most nearly true ideas, and every church hope to develop a categorical wholeness. I should on the whole turn Mr. Stewart's argument to favor merger rather than reject it. But the considerations he raises are highly pertinent and need further exploration. I have already elsewhere* made some comments as to what is primary and on the norm of American religion.

Truly yours,
Von Ogden Vogt

* The Primacy of Worship. Beacon Press.

Sir:

Although I do not count myself among the militant Unitarian Christians, I certainly respect your position and in the halfway house that I and my church inhabits see merit in your cause. . . . What arrangements might be made so we could receive a bulk mailing . . .

Yours very truly,
George C. Whitney
Tucson, Arizona

Sir:

. . . We would be glad if you would put the name and address of our Consistory on the mailing list of The Unitarian Christian . . . Please be assured that . . . our ministers . . . read your magazine with great understanding and interest. . . .

Gotran Petko
Deputy Bishop
Unitarian Church of Hungary
Budapest IX, Hungary

A PRAYER

O God of Life, we thank thee for beautiful things which we never dreamed could make us so happy, and for the way the stars shone on long hard stretches of the road we had to tread. We thank thee for the small expectations which ended in great delight; for the visitations of friendship which took us by surprise in this quarrelling world of ours, and for the success which startled a heart schooled to face frequent defeat. We thank thee that when we prayed for courage to face the worst, there was often the infinite mercy of so much less than the worst; and we thank thee that some of our desires were not satisfied because a wisdom deeper than our own withheld what we wanted for the moment and gave us what we needed for ever. We bless thee that, bereft of some things we felt we could not live without, we have had bestowed upon us other things to enable us to live on—a vision in the restless night, a quiet heart in the dreaded tumult, an inspiring thought when we were at our wits' end, a sufficient grace in spite of our weakness. We praise thee for that within us which, bloody and also bowed, has not been utterly conquered and never shall be, because those who love us make us continually ashamed of lying in the dust. Bless our future days to courage in our own troubles and kindness in the troubles of others. Bless our work to a little splendor and our homes to great loving. Bless our country to responsible freedom and our world to new hope. Forgive our sins against thee and against one another; and lead us gently down the years, out of the good that is into the better that is yet to be. Amen.

—Vivian T. Pomeroy

Unity

(*Continued from page* 4)

all taken the tone of God, you may sing with one voice to the Father through Jesus Christ, that He may listen to you and know you from your chant as the canticle of His only Son."

May God give us the courage and grace and hearts and heads generous enough to meet the challenge of our time.

Job

(*Continued from page* 9)

whom I experience as ethical Will do not coincide. They are one; but how they are one, I do not understand."

Perhaps the anxious, finite man, demanding authentic experience, reality undisguised, and experiencing estrangement and confronting ambiguity and meaninglessness and death, can go no further.

LIBERAL FAITH TODAY

Mankind is on the march. Prosperity cannot forever swallow up religion. Ultimately spiritual values will command the wealth of the nation, and orthodoxy will surrender the field to progressive thinking; and a religion comparable to the one that you and I honor here is bound to be the religion of the future. The force of our Faith has not spent itself. It has hardly found itself. It rose like a morning star in the nineteenth century, and though the clouds gathered before the dawn, and a delayed darkness still prevails, there is evidence of the imminent bursting of that Faith like a sky-rocket or the morning sun to disperse the darkness, and enlighten the world.

—Dana McLean Greeley

Introducing Our Contributors

Charles De Vries was ordained to the Unitarian ministry in 1926. He has served churches in West Upton, Chatham, and Brewster, Massachusetts. A graduate of Hope College and of the Meadville Theological School Mr. De Vries retired last year.

Arthur Foote served the Stockton and Sacramento Churches before assuming the ministry of Unity Church, in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1945. A graduate of Harvard and Meadville, the latter School has conferred upon Mr. Foote the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Charles Conrad Forman has studied at Tufts, Harvard, Brandeis and Oxford Universities. He received his doctorate from Harvard University in 1957. He has been minister of the First Parish in Plymouth, Massachusetts (the oldest continuing Church in America), since 1952. Since 1958 he has edited *The Unitarian Christian.*

Mrs. Herbert Lyman has contributed our guest editorial for this issue of *The Unitarian Christian.* Mrs. Lyman is a member of King's Chapel in Boston and one of the founders of The Unitarian Christian Fellowship now in its fifteenth year. Active in social causes and religious activities Mrs. Lyman has been recently active in Hungarian relief and is a member of the Unitarian Development Fund committee.

Editorial

(*Continued from page* 2)

hend the reality of the "door that no man can shut" and of the Temple of the Spirit where men raise altars to Diety from every race and clime. Before entering this holy place sects and creeds will penitently shed their divisive, accusing epithets of liberal, orthodox, reactionary, pagan. What is spoken at the common shrine will be addressed to an audience of overwhelming Purity and "there will be only one strife—who will love most ardently, and who will hasten fastest to do the Higher Will", as Dr. William Sullivan puts it in his book *"Under Orders."*

I carry a grateful heart for the two dominant influences, which joined, have governed my days, for the grace vouchsafed since early childhood of acquaintance with the life of Jesus of Nazareth and for the uninhibited open mindedness fostered in our church of the free Spirit. Certainly the life of Jesus revealed perfect understanding incarnate, resolving all barriers between men, seeing the living God in every human face and moving amidst the welter of human error and woe putting the crooked straight. Here was the master humanist pioneer, consumate for all time, the Prophet of the spiritual climb towards Unity—"Here was the universal imbedded in the particular.'"

Christian Universalists

I think no fuller, clearer enunciation of present day Unitarianism has been given than that by Dr. Jacob Trapp in an address to the Unitarian Christian Fellowship several years ago. His title was "Humanism and Beyond—A Transition" Following are excerpts.

"The vision we would hold before the world's religions, of saying "brother" in spite of differences, of not thwarting but realizing their common essence, which is love, we are also to hold before ourselves, as a group which, despite differences, can work together for a better world, and which, because of our being inclusive of differences, can do so more greatly.

Edwin Arlington Robinson once likened this world to a spiritual kindergarten in which millions of human beings are trying to spell "God" with the wrong blocks. The wrong blocks, perhaps, are the divisive creeds, the exclusive claims, collective egoisms, and the various names which men insist upon as the only right names. And the right blocks, so this world will yet learn, are those which, in every language, and in wordless deeds, spell love.

In all these things Unitarians can furnish leadership, scholarship, action: and as we do our future will inevitably be even greater than our past. We are bound to grow tremendously in response to a great need, not merely in number but also in stature, if we will but see and fulfill our task of creative participation and leadership in our Judeo-Christian culture, to bring out explicitly what has long been there for those who have eyes to see—a religion of the dignity and responsibility of man, of the transcendent and imminent Devine, of the hallowing of all life, the beauty of which will come full circle only in a brotherhood of faiths which will yet heal our divisions, lead us beyond the exile of the religions, and make all mankind sons of God and members of one another. The essence of Christianity is the sublime simplicity and yet the utter difficulty, the living concreteness and yet the true catholicity of "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me"—an essence which can be transmitted only in a life, from person to person, and which will yet lead to the discovery of an underlying common faith and an essential brotherhood of mankind."

MRS. HERBERT LYMAN

"The only man who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measure anew everytime he sees me, whilst all the rest go on with their old measurements, and expect them to fit me."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

From The President's Desk

Recently Rev. L. A. Garrard, principal of Manchester College, Oxford, England, visited a number of our churches in this country and spoke on English Unitarianism and the educational opportunities of Manchester College. He is a New Testament scholar who returned to the University of Marburg, where he had studied as a young man, and gave two lectures, in German, on the New Testament. In 1955 he won the leading award offered by the Christian Research Foundation, open to scholars of any nationality, for substantial unpublished works on Early Christianity.

Mr. Garrard gave us to understand that English Unitarians value the liberal Christian background of Unitarianism, that they have a sense of history which he missed among his contacts with American Unitarians.

Manchester College has a library rich in works of biblical scholarship as well as those covering oriental studies and places great emphasis upon the study and interpretation of the Bible. It would seem that Manchester graduates should be well prepared to meet those who are dissatisfied with orthodoxy and seek to become not less Christian but more Christian by becoming Unitarians.

A perusal of the preliminary draft of the resolutions from which eight are to be chosen for consideration at the May Meetings discloses a wide range of concerns among our churches. Three amendments of the By-Laws of the A.U.A. appended to these resolutions have brought forth considerable unfavorable discussion and protest. It is to be hoped that at the actual Annual Meeting of the A.U.A. they will be presented in a more acceptable form. The vote of the majority of the churches to merge the Unitarian and Universalist churches will be much discussed at the May meetings but the joint-conference in Syracuse in the fall will be the time of the final report of the commission and vote thereon.

We are gratified to note that the Secretariat of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom has asked permission of the Unitarian Christian to reprint Rev. Carl R. Scovel's report of the International Congress of the I.A.R.F. which was held in Chicago last summer. This article appeared in the 1958 fall issue of our magazine.

Much interest is being shown in our May Meetings Supper at 5:30 on May 24 at Old South Church Parish House in Boston. This will be followed by a Panel Discussion by four young Unitarian Ministers on the subject: "New Thinking Among Unitarian Christians." We know you will want to be present if you can. Reservations should be made in advance at the Reservations Desk at 25 Beacon St., Boston. Tickets will be held here, but must be called for. Any who cannot attend the supper are welcome to come in for the program afterward.

P. H. C.

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Enclosed is $3. Please enroll me as a member of the Fellowship and send me the *Unitarian Christian* for one year.

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